



Memorandum

TO: ALL CHILDREN ACHIEVE
COMMITTEE

FROM: Jane Light

SUBJECT: SAN JOSE PUBLIC LIBRARY - BOOKS
FOR LITTLE HANDS PROGRAM
STATUS REPORT

DATE: March 7, 2003

Approved

Date

RECOMMENDATION

That the Committee accept the Status Report on the Books for Little Hands Program, a comprehensive early literacy program serving children from birth to age five in childcare facilities, their childcare providers and their parents.

BACKGROUND

Reading is now considered to be the foundation for academic achievement. Most students who do not read at grade level by the third grade will never catch up, and risk failure in school. A wide range of experiences with printed and spoken language, from infancy through early childhood, strongly influences a child's future success in reading. All too often daycare sites provide poor environments for the development of emerging literacy--particularly the case for those serving families with limited resources.

Research consistently shows that the quality of teachers is the key to quality education. In a study for the U. S. Department of Education, among home-based childcare providers, only 64% reported any child-related training, and just 6% were accredited by a professional organization.

In San José, approximately 45,000 children between birth and five years of age spend an average of 30 hours a week in childcare. A 1996 needs assessment of childcare providers conducted by the San José Public Library revealed that 93% of the sites assessed had fewer than 15 books. In almost every case the books had torn pages, were outdated, and did not reflect the developmental needs of this age group. Over 90% of the providers said that they did not have the time to visit the library, were not sure how to select books appropriate for their children, and that the lack of fresh, interesting books affected both the teachers' and children's interest in daily reading.

In the city of San Jose, there are at least 403 licensed large family day care sites that care for nine or more children, 543 small family day care sites with eight children or less and at least 369 preschools. Unlicensed providers are more difficult to count but it is known that at least 396

providers are receiving subsidies for providing care for welfare to work parents (Cal Works), and an unknown amount of unlicensed childcare providers exist in the city of San Jose. This data is current as of December 2002 and provided by the 4 C's Council.

In response to this situation, the Books for Little Hands Classroom Book Bag Program was developed in 1997 with the goal of advancing early literacy skills in preschool age children in childcare facilities. Providers were able to sign up for a special library card enabling them to pick up a tote bag filled with 20 pre-selected quality picture books for use in their facility and exchange the bag once a month for a fresh set. Information on literacy related programs and other library services was made available to participants. Funding was initially made possible by a donation of \$95,000 from the San José Public Library Foundation.

Participation in the last three years participation has increased to approximately 291 childcare classrooms and 6,402 children. Since May 2002, when we last reported to the Committee, participation has increased by 20%. The 291 active classroom and family child care sites also represents 873 providers and at least 6, 402 parents. Clearly, childcare providers are eager to take advantage of the resources the Books for Little Hands program offers.

The Classroom Book Bag component is primarily evaluated through provider surveys completed semi-annually. Survey results overwhelmingly indicate that childcare providers participating in the program are increasing literacy activities in the classroom, and that the children are responding positively. Evaluations show that 100% of program providers are reading to the children 2-5 times a day, compared to reading as little as once a week before joining the program. Surveys also consistently indicate that the program increases the children's interest in and enjoyment of reading. Specific comments about the behaviors of the children include, "They all pick favorite books that they have me read to them over and over again," "they are trying to read by themselves," "they play library at the daycare." Providers also requested additional support, such as books for children to share at home, theme related book/activity kits, and literacy training for providers and parents. Customer demand led to the development of three additional components.

Program Expansion

Since early 2001, the Library received supplemental but temporary funding from the City's Healthy Neighborhoods Venture Fund, the Sobrato Family Foundation, and BEA Systems. This funding has supported the following components that are in addition to the Classroom Book Bag Program.

My Books and I: This component builds on the classroom experience by sending books home for children to share with their families. We provide tips for parents on how to use the books at home and a video for each family demonstrating read aloud techniques. We have collaborated with the City of San Jose Office on Early Care and Education Services to provide **My Books and I** training workshops for providers participating in the Smart Start program.

- During this fiscal year, 61 sites with 1,152 children are taking home 4,946 books on a rotating basis. This is an additional 31 sites or a 50% increase since we last reported to the Committee. Of these 61 sites, 31 are Smart Start preschools or family childcare providers.

- The processing of 368 books for 92 children at seven additional Smart Start sites is taking place at this time.
- Our target is to reach at least 75 sites by the end of this fiscal year.

Curriculum Support Theme Kits: Provides theme-related books, puppets, music and other hands-on materials with suggestions for activities. The core set offers 20 different themes, for example, the ABC's, Numbers, Shapes & Colors, etc., enabling a variety of early literacy experiences around topics of special interest to preschoolers.

- Currently 205 theme kits are available for a four-week period.
- Our Jan-Feb statistics show that theme kits have circulated 292 times to 201 providers. These kits are very popular and often all kits are signed out, thus creating a “pent up demand” for this component.
- Therefore we are in the process of increasing the number of kits by 10 for a total of 215.

Early Literacy Education: This component consists of training parents and providers about simple, but effective ways to foster reading readiness. The program's expansion was more complex than originally anticipated, and the demand for new components was greater than predicted, thus limiting the time available to more fully develop the Early Literacy Education Component. This year, a \$10,000 grant from BEA Systems has allowed us to hire a Literacy Program Specialist to focus exclusively on developing a more comprehensive series of easy-to-use Tip Sheets on fostering early literacy that can be sent regularly to providers and parents. In addition, the curriculum for a series of literacy education workshops for providers and parents is being developed. Cheryl Peterson, a former Head Start teacher with a degree in child development joined the program in mid November 2002. Cheryl previously helped establish the Families for Literacy component of the Partners in Reading program and acquired excellent experience planning developmentally appropriate early literacy workshops for parents and young children.

Several workshops have been held or are planned for BFLH customers from February through May. Due to demand, some workshops will be repeated in English and sessions added for Spanish speakers. We can accommodate about 25 to 30 participants per workshop, all materials are free, each attendee receives complete instructions, tip sheets on the topic of the workshop to distribute to parents, and a training certificate documenting hours spent on professional development. So far workshops have been filled to capacity and requests for more sessions have been requested. We plan to make the curriculum available to branch staff as they may wish to offer these workshops to providers or parents in their service areas. Some examples of the tip sheets will be distributed during our presentation to City Council.

- "Make and Take Flannel Stories" workshop was held at the Main Library on Feb. 22.
- "Make and Take Puppets" March 22 at the Rosegarden Branch.
- "Read Aloud Techniques" April 26 at the Santa Teresa Branch
- Repeat of Puppet Workshop in Spanish at Biblioteca Latinoamericana (date TBD).
- Repeat of the Flannel Stories workshop on May 17 at the 5th annual Best Practices for Early Childhood Educators Conference at the Santa Clara County Office of Education.

- Over twenty Tip Sheets for providers and parents have been developed under the categories of Read Aloud Techniques, Home Activities, Language Development, and Communication.
- All tip sheets are available in Spanish, as this is the language most frequently requested.

The program, at full implementation, will include a wide range of services for these children, childcare providers and parents, all promoting the critical early literacy skills that will lead to increased academic achievement when the children begin school in San José. At full implementation we will reach 9,000 children and parents and over 400 childcare providers annually.

ANALYSIS

The purpose of Books For Little Hands is to help childcare providers and parents in San José meet the emerging literacy needs of preschool aged children so they are kindergarten ready.

Outcomes

- Childcare providers in San José will have the knowledge and resources needed to provide early literacy experiences for their students.
- Parents with children in childcare will have the knowledge and resources needed to provide early literacy experiences for their children.
- San José children, ages 0-5, who are in childcare will develop the early literacy skills needed to be reading ready by kindergarten.

Funding Issues

The current Healthy Neighborhood Venture Fund grant for the program expires on June 30, 2003. It represents 73% of the Books For Little Hands current budget. The Library Department is contributing approximately 24% of the budget, with miscellaneous grants comprising the remaining 3%. We have submitted a grant application for the next round of HNVF funding. However, should that not be approved our ability to continue the program in its current form would be jeopardized.

Alignment with City of San José adopted Master Service and Development Plan

Child Care is Good Business, Building for San José's Future (March 1996) documents the critical lack of training for childcare providers, and lists expanding training opportunities as one the plan's six action objectives. The Books for Little Hands program emphasizes training the daycare providers on the importance of early literacy, and techniques to use in their facilities.

One of the six Strategic Outcomes identified in the City Education Policy for the San José Schools/City Collaborative (March 2000) is that children are learning-ready at kindergarten. Books for Little Hands is a comprehensive program to develop the early literacy skills of children ages 0-5 in childcare. Early literacy experiences are critical for a child to be learning-ready in kindergarten. The proposed policy also states that there must be a measurable increase

in parental involvement to increase learning outcomes for all children. Books for Little Hands provides training and resources to help parents provide early literacy experiences.

A second Strategic Outcome of the City Education Policy is that City, school districts and other partners coordinate service delivery and share resources. The Books for Little Hands program coordinates efforts with the Office on Early Care and Education Services, (formerly the Office on Child Care) in offering the program to Smart Start sites. The Books for Little Hands Coordinator, Rosa León-Monday, is a member of the San José Smart Start Advisory, which advises the Mayor's Office and the San José Office on Early Care and Education Services in the development, implementation, and evaluation of the San José Smart Start program. In addition, Rosa is on the planning committee to help organize the annual Early Childhood Best Practices Conference sponsored by the Office on Early Care and Education Services and Santa Clara County Office of Education. The San José Public Library will hold a training session at the conference on "Make and Take Flannel Stories" for providers and parents.

A New Youth Services Master Plan: A Blueprint for Bridging the Digital Divide (2001), reiterates the importance of strengthening family literacy and increasing learning readiness for San José's children and families. Strategic goal 3 specifically states that quality early childhood development and educational programs will be available to young children with the targeted outcome that young children will enter kindergarten ready to succeed academically. The Books for Little Hands program is listed in the action plan as addressing this need.

PUBLIC OUTREACH

To promote the expansion of Books for Little Hands we developed a program brochure outlining the added components for distribution to our current customers, all our library branches, and community organizations associated with childcare providers.

Our Open House to publicize the program's expansion was held on November 28, 2001, at Washington Elementary School. Samples of all four components were on display and visitors observed a Smart Start preschool class using the materials from the theme kit. Other city departments and community organizations that work directly with childcare providers attended. We were pleased to have an article about our program appear in the *San José Mercury News* in late December. (See attachment) In addition, recent articles regarding our program have appeared in the *Bay Area Parent* magazine, *San José CityLine*, and *Inside San José*.

As a result of our successful programs, the library has been asked to partner in the Early Learning Initiatives of the Franklin-McKinley School District and the San Jose Unified School District. These initiatives bring together schools, families, and local service providers to foster kindergarten readiness and promote the healthy development of children prenatal to age five. Through these initiatives, the library will extend the Families For Literacy program and the Books for Little Hands program to the communities of 14 schools in the two districts.

BFLH and Families for Literacy staff attended "La Gran Posada," a family literacy program kickoff on December 7 and 8. This event was hosted by FIRST 5 Santa Clara County and

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sponsored by the San Jose Public Library and other community agencies. The library provided bilingual storytimes for children and staff was present to promote library services.

To increase awareness of our program, in 2002 Books for Little Hands staffed a resource booth at childcare provider conferences held at San José City College and Mission College. Providers we spoke to were very excited about the resources available for them.

JANE LIGHT
Library Director, Library Department